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10. CINEREOUS VULTURE *AEGYPIUS MONACHUS* (LINN.), FAMILY ACCIPITRIDAE, IN KARNATAKA

On December 15, 1998 while on a visit to Harangi Dam, close to Kushalnagar in the Coorg district of Karnataka, a largish vulture was observed soaring over the western edge of the dam area. On approaching to have a closer look, its very dark chocolate brown underparts with pale feet and a smaller (unfeathered) head indicated it to be a cinereous vulture *Aegyptius monachus*. The bird was observed for about 10 minutes. Later, the bird pulled its wings somewhat closer to its body and sailed overhead, as it glided towards the southeastern region of the barrage and disappeared from sight. Kushalnagar region comes within the eastern dry zone of Coorg district. The area where the bird was sighted was dry and open with scattered trees.

The cinereous vulture is widely distributed in central Asia, but in India it is mainly a winter visitor to the north and northwest (as far as

Dhulia district in Maharashtra) (Ali and Ripley 1987). Occasional individuals have been sighted in Assam (Choudhury 1986) and Calcutta (=Kolkata) (Baker 1910) in the northeast. Although very rare, the species has been sighted in South India, once each in Nellore and Karimnagar districts of Andhra Pradesh (Perennou and Santharam 1990, Choudhury 1990) and in Pathanamthitta, Kerala (Kumar 1991). The present sighting is the first record of the species in Karnataka, and hence, is of interest.

March 24, 1999

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11. FIRST (?) SIGHTING OF CRAB PLOVER *DROMAS ARDEOLA* AND PIED HARRIER *CIRCUS MELANOLEUCOS* IN RAIGAD DISTRICT, MAHARASHTRA

On November 22, 1998 a flock of six crab plovers (*Dromas ardeola*) was seen on the sandy beach of Agardanda village near Murud-Janjira,

Taluka Murud, Raigad district in the Konkan area of Maharashtra. Probably the same flock was sighted again on December 20, 1998 on the

Agardanda village creek during low tide. The distance between the nearest crab plover, a loner, and the small boat carrying the observers, was about 50 m. During 20 minutes of observation, three small crabs were eaten by a single crab plover. The crab plover was seen making a sudden rush at the crab, stabbing and lifting it up in the beak, shaking it vigorously and dropping it in the mud before eating it. It was observed that the crab plovers preferred to fly close to the sea surface. The bird had a characteristic call, *Twell-tak, Twell-tak* while on the wing.

In the morning between 0645 and 0930 hrs of the same day, at Dighi village, Taluka

Shriwardhan, Raigad district, we also sighted a pair of pied harriers (*Circus melanoleucos*) on a mangrove mudflat. The harriers were soaring at a low height. At their approach, common sandpipers, greenshanks and redshanks took flight. On March 13-14, 1999, a pair of pied harriers was seen on the same mudflat in Dighi village.

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12. OCCURRENCE OF LESSER FLORICAN *SYPHEOTIDES INDICA* AT HOSOR, IN NASHIK DISTRICT, MAHARASHTRA

A lesser florican *Sypheotides indica* was sighted by one of us (BR) at the Hindustan Aeronautical Limited (HAL) complex at Hosor, 20 km from Nashik towards Dhulia on National Highway 3 on September 24, 1998. An adult male in full breeding plumage was observed performing display jumps on September 25, 1998 on a subsequent visit. (For a description of the HAL complex see Raha and Prakash, *JBNHS 98(1)*: 110-111).

The bird was recorded as common, and probably present throughout the year in Nashik and Ahmednagar during the 19th century (Hume and Marshal 1879; Sankaran *et al.* 1992). There were very few confirmed sightings of this bird in Maharashtra during a recent survey (Sankaran *et al.* 1992), and none from Nashik district. We think this first confirmed sighting of the highly threatened species from an unreported site is worth recording.

The only threat to the lesser florican in this high security area are aircraft in flight, but since the flight frequency is very low, the probability of a hit is also low.

We thank HAL for permission to visit their complex. We thank Mr. Nag, Horticulturist for arranging all permits required to see the florican and Mr. Kale and Mr. Patnaik at the Air Traffic Control tower, HAL for their hospitality and sharing their natural history notes of the area with us.

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